United Nations A/AC.109/2002/18

General Assembly

Distr.: General
30 May 2002

Original: English

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from June 2001 to May 2002

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of resolution 56/73 of 10 December 2001, adopted at its fifty-sixth session, considered it important "to continue ... efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization" and in paragraph 3 requested the Department of Public Information to "take measures through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization". The present report, prepared in response to that mandate, covers the activities undertaken by the Department in the field of decolonization during the period from June 2001 to May 2002.

2. The activities of the Department of Public Information pertaining to decolonization continued to focus on coverage of the work of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, building partnerships with civil society through the network of United Nations information centres and strengthening the use of the Internet for the widest possible dissemination of information. The independence of East Timor, one of the Territories to which the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples continued to apply until 20 May 2002, was a subject of extensive coverage.

II. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

3. The Department provided full and comprehensive coverage of the General Assembly debate on decolonization, including in the Special Political and

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Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Special attention was paid to the opening of the 2002 session of the Special Committee. The opening statement made by the Deputy Secretary-General was issued as a press release and was widely disseminated. This and all press releases issued at Headquarters pertaining to the work of the United Nations in the area of decolonization were distributed electronically to the network of United Nations information centres worldwide.

4. The Department also provided coverage of the proceedings of the Pacific regional seminar organized by the Special Committee in Nadi, Fiji, from 14 to 16 May 2002. A press release was issued, highlighting the agenda of the seminar. The message of the Secretary-General to the Pacific regional seminar was also issued and widely distributed.

5. Decolonization was included as one of the topics covered in the Department's guided tours, and was discussed in the training of new guides and in the guides' daily briefings. During the reporting period, the Department held two special briefings on decolonization for the guided tours staff. In addition, decolonization was the subject of an extended briefing for a visiting group of 25 students from Drew University (United States of America). Also, during the same period, the Department responded to 42 requests for information about decolonization.

III. Independence of East Timor

6. With East Timor's accession to independence on 20 May 2002, the Department of Public Information, jointly with the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), undertook a number of activities to highlight this event as a United Nations success story. An op-ed article by the Secretary-General, heralding the birth of a new nation, was placed in a major newspaper in the United States and other newspapers around the world. A press release was issued announcing the decision of the General Assembly to remove East Timor from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories upon its accession to independence. A series of fact sheets, listing 20 major achievements of UNTAET, and a chronology of United Nations action in East Timor were issued. The Department's online news service also set up a special "In Focus" section on East Timor on its page on the United Nations web site in order to highlight the work of the United Nations in East Timor.

7. The independence celebration was broadcast live by Radio UNTAET. UNTAET's television station, TVTL, also broadcast the events in the Dili area and facilitated nationwide broadcast.

8. At a special event held at United Nations Headquarters to celebrate East Timor's independence, a film screening was arranged for delegates and staff. The Department also organized a special exhibit at United Nations Headquarters, illustrating the successful East Timor decolonization process.

9. The Department continued to assist UNTAET with its information programme both inside and outside the Territory. It helped identify and select information officers and a graphic designer for UNTAET. It also organized a briefing visit by UNTAET's Director of Public Information to United Nations Headquarters.

10. The United Nations Information Centre at Sydney worked with an advertising agency on a three-minute documentary on East Timor, which was promoted to Australian and international media. The video was also made available to viewers through the United Nations web site.

IV. United Nations radio and television

11. The Department's radio and television sections covered various aspects of decolonization and related issues, including the independence of East Timor, in daily news programmes and current affairs magazines in the official and unofficial languages. Two radio producers were sent to East Timor to cover the country's accession to independence. Their daily reports and interviews were all incorporated into United Nations Radio's daily news and weekly current affairs magazine. The celebrations of East Timor's independence were broadcast by United Nations Radio in all six official languages of the United Nations, as well as in Portuguese.

12. In its news programmes, United Nations Radio continued to report on the work of the Special Committee of 24 and the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly. Subjects covered by news and feature reports included the situation in East Timor, the work of UNTAET, the Pacific regional seminar on decolonization in Nadi, Fiji, in May 2002 and the opening of the session of the Special Committee in February 2002.

13. The Department produced a 20-minute "B-roll" video on the work of the United Nations in East Timor for distribution to broadcasters worldwide. The Department also deployed a video producer and a Portuguese-speaking and an English-speaking radio producer to cover the independence celebrations. The video will later be used for "United Nations in Action" television programmes, as well as for "Year in Review" later in the year.

V. Publications

14. The English version of the Department's new brochure entitled "The United Nations and Decolonization" was widely distributed through the network of information centres. Copies were also distributed at the Pacific regional seminar on decolonization in Nadi, Fiji, in May 2002. At the request of non-governmental groups in Guam, 2,000 copies of the brochure were sent to Hagatna, Guam. French and Spanish versions of the brochure are now being printed and will soon be available for general distribution.

15. Work is also under way to have the Department's reference book *Decolonization: The task ahead* published in English, with revisions and updated information on the political status and socio-economic conditions of 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The draft is now under review.

16. *UN Chronicle*, the Department's quarterly magazine, continued to provide coverage of the General Assembly's work in the field of decolonization. Under the banner "Democracy and decolonization", the magazine presented in its year-ending issue for 2001 an in-depth analysis of East Timor's path to independence. It also published an article by Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoué, Vice-Chairman of the Special

Committee, on the proceedings of the Caribbean regional seminar (Havana, Cuba, 23-25 May 2001).

VI. Internet

17. A web page created in February 2000 to highlight developments in the area of decolonization continued to be updated. In addition to posting decolonization-related United Nations documents in English, French and Spanish, the page provides a brief history of decolonization, explains the role and work programme of the Special Committee of 24 and provides updates on its activities, including the various regional seminars.

18. The Department also maintained and regularly updated a web site on UNTAET on the United Nations home page. The site contained briefing notes, fact sheets, documents and other press material. With the launching of United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor, the Department has created a web page to report on the work of the new Mission. The Department continues to maintain the web page of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara on the United Nations web site.

VII. United Nations information centres and services

19. The network of United Nations information centres, services and offices continued to promote the United Nations work in the area of decolonization. During the period under review, such activities concentrated on the developments in East Timor. Where necessary, the centres translated the message by the Secretary-General and the op-ed article by his Special Representative for East Timor following the elections of August 2001, for placement in key media in the countries that they service. The United Nations Information Centre at Lisbon took the lead in translating into Portuguese the information materials on the political process in East Timor for dissemination to the media and opinion makers, as well as for posting on the web. In addition, these translations were shared with other United Nations offices in Portuguese-speaking countries with a view to assisting them in their outreach activities.

20. The United Nations Information Centre at Jakarta took the lead role in informing the media and other opinion makers in Indonesia about the United Nations activities in East Timor, and translated the relevant information materials, including the brochure "The United Nations and East Timor" (DPI/2152) into Bahasa Indonesia. The United Nations Information Centre at Bonn prepared a background paper in German on the August 2001 elections in East Timor; it was widely disseminated to the German media, posted on its web site and also made available to the United Nations Information Service at Vienna.

21. The United Nations Information Centre at Tokyo organized a mission for the Japanese media to East Timor to get a first-hand view of the developments there and, upon return, held a debriefing session for the participants to get their feedback and views.

22. The United Nations Information Centre at Rio de Janeiro assisted one of the three Brazilian educational television channels in the preparation of a one-hour

feature on East Timor and provided it with relevant United Nations background and video material. The programme was aired nationwide in April 2002.

23. United Nations information centres, including those at Lisbon, Rio de Janeiro and Sydney, assisted the Special Representative of the Secretary-General during his official travel and made extensive media arrangements, including for press conferences and exclusive interviews. In addition, the Director of the United Nations Information Centre at Lisbon represented the United Nations at several high-level conferences held in Portugal on various aspects of transition in East Timor and wrote several op-ed and other articles that were carried by the Portuguese media.

24. The United Nations Information Service at Geneva provided regular news coverage and press briefings on East Timor and UNTAET activities. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General briefed the media accredited to Geneva during the year. The United Nations Information Service at Geneva also distributed information material relating to East Timor's transition to independence.

25. The staff of the United Nations Information Service at Vienna, speaking on the work of the United Nations, included in their lectures information about the Organization's activities in the field of decolonization. The issue was also mentioned in lectures in the framework of reforms, especially as regards institutional reforms, and the work of the Trusteeship Council.

26. During the period covered by the present report, United Nations information centres organized various activities aimed at disseminating information about and promoting awareness of the United Nations work on decolonization. These included the organization of press conferences and lectures, participation in round tables, production of information material, and the preparation of press releases and audio and visual products on the issue.